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THE JOURNAL OF
THE CHURCH UNION COMMITTEE
FOR FAITH AND UNITY
IN CO-OPERATION WITH THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON DOCTRINE
OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH UNION AND THE CLERICAL UNION

EDITORIAL

THE CHURCH in India and Pakistan continues to be the chief focus of interest in the field of ecumenical activity, and this Spring number of FAITH AND UNITY is devoted largely to problems arising from Indian efforts to promote unity among Christians. By large majorities in each of its constituent houses, the General Council of the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon has given general approval to the Plan of Church Union in North India/Pakistan, as amended by the Negotiating Committee in December, 1959. The Plan is now referred to the Diocesan Councils for consideration, and the passing of resolutions of general approval or disapproval. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan of the CIPBC is asked by the General Council to refer to the Metropolitans of the other Churches and Provinces of the Anglican Communion the question whether they will be prepared to enter into relations of full communion with the united churches from their inauguration. It has been suggested that some members of the General Council supported the motion of approval simply in order that the Plan might go to the Diocesan Councils for discussion. At the same time, there clearly are many in the CIPBC who are ready to accept the Plan. Here the Lambeth Report, 1958, has undoubtedly been of great influence, a fact which critics of that Report will regret, having in mind its inadequate discussion of the North Indian Plan.

It is understood that the question of relationship with the proposed united churches will be considered synodically in other parts of the Anglican Communion. In England, Joint Committees of the Convocations will doubtless be appointed to consider the matter. In all these discussions, it is of the first importance that the Lambeth Report should not be taken as a starting point. The committee which advised the Lambeth Conference, 1958, on the North Indian Plan seems to have been obsessed with problems relating to the ministry. Even so their conclusions are questionable, even when reconsidered in the light of the Preamble to the Plan adopted by the General Council of the CIPBC, printed on pages 4-6 of this number. Other matters of no less importance were given but scant treatment and need to be studied thoroughly before any final judgment is made. Fortunately there is time for such study; no doubt the Metropolitans will see to it that full use is made of the opportunity.

It goes without saying that any plan for the reunion of Christian bodies must ensure the provision of a valid and acceptable ministry. It is equally beyond question that the Negotiating Committee in North India have worked unremittingly to make this provision for the united churches which they envisage. Their approach is a novel one, and if fair criticism is to be made we

must understand the approach which has led them to adopt the form of Unification of the Ministry embodied in the Plan. For this reason we are printing an article by Archdeacon Sully, secretary of the Negotiating Committee, which first appeared in the committee's organ CHURCH UNION NEWS AND VIEWS, and is reprinted by kind permission of the editor. What Dr Sully has written is, of course, a personal and not an official statement. The only official explanation of the Act of Unification is that which is to be drawn from the Plan itself. On the other hand, the Plan does not give an explicit answer to some of the questions which must be asked, and as there is as yet no united church to which the enquirer may turn, Dr Sully's article does provide an interpretation which is as nearly authoritative as may be.

At the time of writing the final amendments adopted by the Negotiating Committee in December have not been made public in England, and further comment must be reserved until information is available, as it will be shortly in official booklet now being prepared for publication. Attention must, however, be drawn to elements of the Plan, apart from proposals relating to the ministry, which appear to be unsatisfactory. Those who accept the somewhat superficial assurances of the Lambeth Conference will almost inevitably link the question of relationship with the united churches solely to the decision as to whether or no the Act of Unification can be thought to convey episcopal orders on ministers who have not been episcopally ordained. Such a limitation of discussion must be vigorously opposed. The question of communion with the united churches must be related to their whole character, and this, in any case, cannot be assessed until they have come into existence. The Plan submitted to the Lambeth Conference amply justified a conclusion that this character would be seriously defective.

The recent history of the Church of South India brings out the danger of premature decisions in regard to relationships with new united churches. We have the permission of Bishop Newbigin to publish a letter he wrote to Fr Dalby, S.S.J.E., on the continued admission of non-episcopal ministers into the ministry of the Church of South India, although this is against the strict provisions of the Constitution of the C.S.I. Some at least who accepted the Convocation decisions of 1955 in regard to the C.S.I. did so on the assumption that this practice would not continue. Engaging though Bishop Newbigin's arguments may be, his justification of this action on the part of the C.S.I. points to the need for explicit assurances as a guide to action rather than inferences which may not in fact be accepted by the other party.

(continued on page 11)

PREAMBLE TO THE PLAN OF CHURCH UNION IN NORTH INDIA & PAKISTAN

**adopted by the General Council of
the C.I.P.B.C., December, 1959**

The General Council receives the third edition of the Plan of Church Union in North India and Pakistan, adopted by the Negotiating Committee at its meeting at Pachmari in April 1957, and sent to the negotiating Churches for decision.

The General Council notes with satisfaction that the instructions given to its delegates by Decision 30 of its last meeting, with regard to Confirmation, have been successfully carried out.

The General Council notes that its delegates were able to secure, according to Decision 29 of the last meeting, considerable improvements in the procedure for the bringing together of the episcopates and the unification of the ministry.

The General Council records that:—

- (a) the Preface to the Prayer and Formula at the 'Bringing together of the Episcopates' expresses sufficiently clearly the Anglican view that the historic episcopate is being conveyed to the bishops of the Methodist Church in Southern Asia, and believes that the Preface, Prayer, especially as now amended on the advice of the Lambeth Conference, and the Formula should by God's grace achieve this end, as well as enabling the bishops of the C.I.P.B.C. to enter into the spiritual heritage of the episcopal branch of the Methodist Church. It notes that the formula at the Laying on of Hands, as well as the Preface, limits this step to these purposes, and does not by itself constitute them bishops in the Churches of North India and Pakistan.
- (b) the statement of Intention in the Representative Act of Unification of the Ministry, taken with the Preface in the service, sufficiently expresses the intention that all the participants shall become ministers in a three-fold ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons which is to be reverently used and esteemed in the United churches of North India and Pakistan. In leaving it to the wisdom of God to determine what is to be bestowed on each participant, which we may expect to be different in each case, it is on the human level legitimate to place different interpretations upon what God does in the Act. Thus it is our conviction that in the rite episcopal ordination is bestowed upon those not previously so

ordained, though it does not repeat any ordination previously received; while the Prayers, the Laying on of Hands and the Formula, taken in conjunction with the Preface, have been judged adequate to convey Holy Orders in the historic succession. The declaration made by each participant in the Act gives assurance of his intention humbly to receive in the rite "such grace commission and authority" as God wills to bestow on him, which intention will surely be fulfilled by the grace of God in response to the Prayer and the Laying on of Hands with the Formula. The Prayer has now been amended in accordance with the advice of the Lambeth Conference, and will be said together by one representative from each of the uniting Churches, our representative being a bishop.

- (b) the Committee on Church Unity and the Church Universal of the Lambeth Conference of 1958 has generally approved the provisions of Part I of the Plan of Union. In Part II the participation of the bishops both in the 'Bringing together of the Episcopates' and the Representative Act, in which similar prayers are said over the bishops twice within a short space of time, has caused confusion and has even raised doubts as to their efficacy. But in each case the intention expressed in the Preface and Formula differs. There is no doubt that it is the first of the two which provides consecration in the historic succession, to the Methodist bishops. In the second all the bishops, being now in the historic succession, neither can nor do receive any further consecration, but are brought into the common ministry of the Church of North India and the Church of Pakistan in which the inheritance of the uniting churches are combined and transcended. If this is clearly understood, the doubts felt in the Committee at Lambeth should be dispelled.

Resolution

The General Council renders thanks to Almighty God for the manifest guidance of the Holy Spirit in the negotiations for Church Union in North India and Pakistan during the last thirty years, and particularly in the progress made in recent years.

Having considered the recommendations of the Lambeth Conference of 1958, together with the further advice received through his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, and also the decisions taken by the Negotiating Committee on Church Union, after the publication of the 3rd edition of the Plan, at its meeting at Jabalpur on December 2nd to 4th, 1959, the General Council, acting under Canon I of Chapter XLII of the Constitution, Canons and Rules, gives general approval to the Plan of Church

Union (3rd edition) Parts I and II, and refers the Plan to the Diocesan Councils for the consideration and the passing of resolutions of general approval or disapproval.

In taking this action its trusts that the other Churches and Provinces of the Anglican Communion will find it possible to enter into relations of full communion with the united Churches from their inauguration.

Further the General Council requests His Grace the Metropolitan to refer to the Metropolitans of the other Churches and Provinces of the Anglican Communion the question whether they will be prepared to enter into relations of full communion with the united Churches from their inauguration, that the Church of this Province may come to its final decision in the light of their replies.

SECURING A UNIFIED MINISTRY FOR A UNITED CHURCH

A note with special reference to the Plan of Union
in North India

1. SOME PRINCIPLES INVOLVED

It is generally agreed that in ordination it is God (in Christ) who ordains, in and through his Church. Hence in any rite in which something more than a mere human authorisation to office is sought, authority and grace are similarly sought from God and not merely from his Church. Prayer with the laying on of hands has thus been adopted in the Plan in the right of unification of the ministry. (Cf. Plan, p.56, para. 14; and Lambeth p. 2.32 last para.).

God works in and through his Church, where ministry, authority and *episcopate* are recognised, organised and continued. Hence the outward sign involves the authority recognised in the Church, for the Anglican the laying on of episcopal hands.

What God has already done and blessed is to be fully and mutually recognised, with no suggestion of a repetition. There is to be no denial of an ordination already received, nor a repetition of it. (Cf. Lambeth p.2.36 at the bottom). Yet differences in ministerial tradition are to be frankly recognised, since no ministry can claim to have been unaffected by our divisions. Divisions in the Church have involved the 'Catholicity' of the ministry, with restrictions both in the ministry of the Word, and, particularly, in that of the Sacraments.

We cannot think of union plans having to wait for full agreement on every point of theology and ecclesiology involved; and it is our disunion which is largely responsible for divergencies in belief and interpretation, for lack of understanding and one-

sided emphases. Hence it may be legitimate to accept the 'historic episcopate' without any particular interpretation, or alternative forms of baptism without any initial resolution of the tensions involved, because it seems to be the way towards fuller understanding and agreement. It should not be taken to imply either that interpretations are not necessary, nor that differences can just be ignored. It may well be that where we are dealing with the mysteries of our faith a full comprehension must involve all the saints within the fellowship of the one Spirit.

The Plan has thus aimed at comprehension, with allowance for difference of interpretation. While a particular interpretation is not to be forced upon the whole united Church at the outset; equally the Plan has sought to avoid anything which would *exclude* an interpretation legitimately held in any of the uniting Churches.

2. ORDINATION AND ORDERS

Our differing traditions involve differing interpretations of these words, with a serious possibility of misunderstanding.

(a) The episcopal Churches retain the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter (priest) and deacon; though in what sense they are three 'orders' is not fully agreed. It may be sufficient to recognise (as the Plan does) that each form of ministry has God's special calling, and thus a 'character' of its own. Sacramental ordination belongs to the bishop; the celebration of the Eucharist to bishop and presbyter; the ministry of word and of service belongs to all three.

Within this context of tradition and thought, 'ordination' is used of the call and authorisation to either grade of the ministry, and thus the same individual may be 'ordained' more than once without any suggestion of repetition or suspicion of reordination.

It may be recalled here that at Lambeth 1948, in the appendix on 'Supplemental Ordination,' further theological issues were raised, and there seems still to be a need for greater theological clarity at this point than has yet been achieved.

(b) In the non-episcopal Churches there is ordinarily but one 'order' recognised—that of presbyter, though there may be lay elders or deacons. Ordination is to that one ministry. In practice, if not in clear theory, the minister is ordained to a ministry of the whole Church and by a group of ministers representing the whole Church.

In this context there is but one 'ordination' which is unrepeatable; and any further 'ordination' must appear to be a reordination. Yet the minister in this case cannot just be identified with the second 'order' in (a). The presbyterian 'presbyter' is more than the episcopalian 'presbyter' in virtue of exercising his part in a corporate *episcopate*, while he may be held by some

to lack somewhat in comparison with the episcopalian 'priest.' A superintendent or 'Moderator' is not ordained to his office, and there is no corporation of moderators to correspond with an episcopal Synod. Thus simply to rank together all who were called presbyters or priests in the uniting Churches in a second 'order' of ministry, would be to overlook a significant difference in the traditions. Similarly the elements of *episcopate* exercised by presbyterian ministers in presbytery should not be overlooked in securing a united episcopate for the united Church.

These differences in traditional usage seem to call for caution in the use of the term 'ordination' in connection with the rites with which we are here concerned.

3. INITIAL UNIFICATION

God gives the unity we seek to the several uniting Churches in response to their seeking and prayer, and on the basis of the measure of agreement reached. That gift of unity is recognised in the Inaugural Service in all schemes with humble thanksgiving. But this may not by itself secure the fully unified ministry of the united Church. At this point we need to recognise the differences of method.

(a) At the inauguration of the C.S.I. that Church received both its membership and its ministry. Anglican bishops ceased to be Anglican and became bishops of the C.S.I., and presbyters of all the uniting Churches became presbyters of the C.S.I. There was not any separate rite of unification and, for some at least, differences remain with consequent scruples unremoved, and the necessity of the Pledge.

(b) In the case of the Ceylon Scheme and the N.I./P. Plan there is a corresponding first Step, inaugurating the united Church, but this forms part of a larger rite of inauguration and does not by itself secure the united ministry of the Church.

In the Ceylon Scheme what in the north we have called Step 1 has been distinguished as 'The Service of Union,' and on p. 76 the significance of this is clearly stated,—“That these Churches . . . are become one Church of Lanka, and that all the ministers and members of the several uniting Churches are now knit together in one communion and fellowship.” But this is immediately followed by the further rites by which bishops “are now possessed of the fullness of the ministry of this Church in which are joined together our divers ministries,” and in which ministers of the uniting Churches are received “Into the Presbyterate of the Church of Lanka.” (Scheme 21-22). This is, if anything, made even more explicit in the N.I./P. Plan where on p. 59, paras. 21 and 22, the bishops and other ministers are spoken of as “having entered the ministry of the Church of North India/Pakistan by the Representative Act of Unification of the Ministry.”

In these cases, therefore, it would be true to say that as a result of Step 1 there are already bishops and presbyters brought within the membership and fellowship of the united Church along with the laity; but while they are thus bishops or presbyters 'in' the united Church, they are not at this stage bishops or presbyters 'of' the united Church..

In the case of membership we are content to accept God's gift of unity without further question, though there are some, of course, who would draw a distinction between members episcopally confirmed and those not. But in the case of the ministry, the inaugural rite is to be supplemented by rites of unification, and that partly at least to meet Anglican scruples. Lambeth 1948 recognised that such a method would seem more likely to prove acceptable if adopted in future schemes of union.

4. CEYLON AND NORTH INDIA/PAKISTAN

The Scheme and the Plan agree in the need for an initial rite of unification; but differ in the method. Historically this is mainly due to two factors:—

(a) the inclusion in the N.I./P. Plan of the strong Methodist Church in Southern Asia with an episcopate of its own, with the consequent need of bringing together the two divergent episcopal traditions and two sets of bishops;

(b) the influence in the N.I. negotiations of the strong presbyterian element (Scottish, Irish, and American) in the United Church of Northern India, with a strong theological leadership.

The Ceylon Scheme, with its comparative simplicity and the prominence given throughout to the bishops, naturally appeals to Anglicans; while the Plan by comparison is rendered far more complex and difficult to follow. It has to be recognised, however, that the Ceylon method is unlikely to prove acceptable in any region where presbyterianism is strong, and, if it is the only form of unification which can satisfy Anglican difficulties and scruples, the whole question may need to be further examined.

The difficulties pointed out by the Lambeth Committee are largely due to the insertion of Step 2 before the Central rite of Unification, and on this note we may consider that this complication may be removed, either by there being no second episcopate to bring in, or by some other method being possible outside the main inaugural service.

(i) The Ceylon Scheme secures the episcopate of the united Church first, taking the existing Anglican bishops in Ceylon and securing the consecration of any additional bishops needed. These bishops are then commissioned as bishops of the Church of Lanka by the laying on of hands by representatives of the uniting Churches.

Each bishop of the united Church then carries out the unification of the presbyters in his diocese, by the laying on of his hands with prayer.

(ii) In the N.I./P. Plan the procedure is different.

(a) The ministry of each uniting Church (by representation) which is to be brought into the ministry of the united Church, is presented before God *as a whole*, whether consisting of bishops and presbyters, or of presbyters who have shared in the exercise of *episcopate* (see para. 12 on p. 56), so that each and every minister may receive from God the continuance of what he has already received, together with the additional authority and grace which may in God's sight be needed for his ministry in the united Church. It is made clear that in the case of existing bishops that ministry is to be the ministry of a bishop in the united Church, and in the case of existing presbyters that of a presbyter. Thus the united Church receives from God its bishops and representative presbyters together, without any suggestion of discrimination, yet without confusion or and ignoring of the difference existing and continuing between bishop and presbyter. Equally there is no discrimination, nor any ignoring of the difference, between presbyters who have and those who have not shared in a corporate exercise of episcopate, nor between those who have and those who have not previously received episcopal ordination. (see para. 15 on p. 56).

(b) In the actual procedure, whether in the central Act or in the Diocesan Acts which follow, presbyters are associated with bishops in the laying on of hands.

(c) In Step 3 of the N.I./P. Plan *the nucleus of the united ministry is first secured*, consisting of one bishop and two or three presbyters. They are brought into the united ministry by God in answer to prayer and through the laying on of hands of one representative of each of the uniting Churches. In this Act it is open to us to think of God using and continuing in and through this nucleus the several traditions of the uniting Churches. Anglicans will note that the representative of the C.I.P.B.C. would certainly be one of its bishops through whose sharing in this ministry they can be confident that the tradition of historic episcopacy is to be ensured and continued in the united Church.

This nucleus ministry, a bishop and presbyters of the united Church, then conducts the rest of the rite of unification for the ministers from each of the uniting churches; and the continuance in the diocesan rites (Step 5) proceeds on the same lines.

In this procedure each minister, whether bishop or presbyter, will receive the laying on of hands of a bishop and associated presbyters. Thus a former bishop of the C.I.P.B.C. may receive the laying on of hands of one who had been a fellow-bishop in his Church. But the latter is now acting not as a bishop of the

C.I.P.B.C. but as a bishop of the united church. Similarly a presbyter of the U.C.N.I. may be receiving the laying on of hands of one who was a fellow-presbyter in the U.C.N.I. But he will be acting now as a presbyter of the new united Church in this unique ministry of reconciliation.

While the fundamental principle of the Act is the humble willingness to receive from God whatever of grace and authority he will to give in each case, it is open to an Anglican, in accordance with his own conscientious convictions, to believe that God will be supplying through the ministry of the bishop the tradition of episcopal ordination for those who have not previously received it. He may even from his own point of view speak of it as an 'ordination' to the new form of ministry, of one who had already received ordination from God. The non-Anglican, as we have already seen, will not be able to regard the rite as an ordination in the sense in which he uses the term, and will easily misunderstand his brother Anglican's usage. It may thus be wiser to follow the advice of Ceylon and to avoid giving old names to what is a new and unique rite without any adequate name.

The procedure is wholly mutual in all this, for whatever special tradition in its ministry is treasured in either of the uniting Churches, members of that Church may believe that God will continue that treasured tradition as something to be wholly shared by all who are receiving the laying on of hands, and the laying on of the hands of the representative of that tradition may be for him the outward and visible sign of this gracious act of God.

T. DONALD SULLY.

EDITORIAL—(continued from page 3).

The statement on Church and Ministry, which we re-print from the South India Churchman, was drawn up by a theological Commission representing the C.S.I. and Lutheran bodies in India. It is of more than local interest for it discusses issues which must be faced by all who seek the reconciliation of episcopal and non-episcopal Christian confessions, whether or no they accept the findings of this commission.

Events in the Church of Sweden are adding to the difficulties of those members who uphold Catholic faith and practice. We commend them particularly to the prayers of our readers.

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

Letter from Bishop Lesslie Newbigin to Fr Dalby, S.S.J.E.

as from/ 2 Eaton Gate,

London, S.W.1.

19th September, 1959.

Dear Father Dalby,

1. I must begin by drawing your attention to the fact that your letter reveals an important mis-understanding of the Basis of Union. As I say, I do not have a copy with me here, but if you will refer to the printed text you will notice that there is no unambiguous undertaking that at a particular date every minister in the C.S.I. will be episcopally ordained. It is stated that at the end of 30 years the Church will make its own rules regarding the admission of ministers of other churches, bearing in mind *two* principles, namely (1) the intention that every person exercising a regular ministry should be episcopally ordained, and (ii) the intention that there should be full communion with all the parent bodies. On the problem of relating these two intentions to each other I shall speak in a later paragraph.

2. I must also try to explain (from memory) what I tried to say in the address to which you refer. It was, I think, a talk given at the time of the 10th anniversary of the inauguration of the union, and I referred to the fact that 10 years previously, there had been much doubt as to the direction in which C.S.I. would develop. There had been those who feared, or hoped, that it would become simply a sort of extension of the Anglican Communion. There had been those who feared, or hoped, that it would become another of the protestant denominations. I said, I believe, that neither of these things was happening. That—on the one hand—episcopacy was being much more highly valued, had become much more central in the life of the Church, than many had expected; and that—on the other—the Church had become much more open to the non-episcopal communions than many had expected. The instance to which I was referring was a case in which a bishop proposed to receive into the ministry of the C.S.I. a person who had been ordained in the Baptist churches. I was acting for the Moderator at the time. I wrote to draw the Bishop's attention to the fact that this was going beyond the strict provisions of the Constitution, seeing that this only provides that ministers of the parent churches should be so received. The matter was therefore referred to the Synod Executive (a body consisting of all the Diocesan Bishops plus one Presbyter and one Layman from each Diocese). This body

unanimously agreed that the minister in question should be so received. A minister of the Roman Church has been similarly received, and there may have been other cases. I interpret this development as arising from the very strong desire of the Church for unity, in order that the great blessings which we have received through our unity may be shared with others, and in order that the sin and scandal of our disunity in the face of the pagan world may not be perpetuated a day longer than is necessary.

3. The provision in the Basis on Union to which I referred in the paragraph 1 above refers to two intentions, both of which the Church is to bear in mind when it makes its own rule in this matter. At present these two intentions are incompatible. This section of the Basis might therefore be criticised as irresponsible. But I have always thought, and I think others agree, that this was an act of faith that God would show us the way forward if we were faithful as far as we could see. In the book which I wrote just before the inauguration of the union (*The Reunion of the Church*) I said it was an act of faith that in the coming 30 years God would lead us all a good deal farther down the road of reunion, so that what now seems a hopeless incompatibility would be seen to have the possibility of a way forward. I do believe that we are being led forward. What is happening in South India is that the historic episcopate is actually proving itself to be, what Catholic theologians said it was, a focus of unity. Since 1949, as you know, several groups—some large—have come into the united Church and others are being drawn towards it. At each point the same principle has been followed as was followed in 1947—that is to say, that the non-episcopal ministries are accepted and received into the united church, but integrated into a body which has at its centre the historic episcopal ministry, and in which all ordinations and consecrations are within the historic succession. Thus the fact that the C.S.I. has gone beyond its own basis in receiving ministers of other communions than the parent ones does not arise from an indifference towards holy order, but from its opposite, from a desire that the disorder of Christendom should be ended and a true re-integration of the dismembered parts takes place around the backbone which is given in the historic episcopal ministry.

4. Those who prayed and planned for the union of 1947 did so in the faith that it would be the beginning of wider union, until there should be in South India a body which really represented "the great catholic unity of the Body of Christ." I think that faith is being justified. And I therefore find it impossible to believe that in 1977 the Church will decide to bolt and bar the door making it impossible for this process of reunion to continue. Of course neither I nor anyone else can say what will be in the mind of the Church in 1977, and it is an essential

part of the Basis of Union that this question is left open. But if in 1977 the Church resolves that some place may still be found in its ministry for those who have come into the united church from non-episcopal communions it will not be because of indifferentism on these matters. It will be because the historic episcopate has continued to prove itself, as it has certainly done in these first 12 years: a real focus of unity, a magnet drawing together the scattered fragments and bringing them effectively within one field of energy.

5. I recognise that this opens out large questions—questions of theology of orders, and, by implication, questions regarding other ways of reunion which are being advocated at present. If you feel that it would be helpful to discuss these matters face to face I should be very happy to participate in such discussions. You will of course understand that I can do so only as an individual, and that authoritative statements about the position of the C.S.I. can only be made by the proper authorities of the Church as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

LESSLIE NEWBIGIN,

Bishop.

CHURCH OR CHURCHES?

Students of the Bible have long been agreed that our modern use of the word "churches" is quite contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. It is true that the word is found in the plural in such phrases as "the care of all the churches"¹ "confirming the churches"² and "the seven churches which are in Asia"³, but in all such phrases the word is used not in the sense of denominations, but of local representations of the one Church of God, parishes or dioceses in later terminology. Occasionally it is used in the sense of assemblies for the Eucharist, where we should perhaps speak of congregations, as "Let your women keep silence in the churches"⁴. But nowhere is the word used of rival religious bodies having either friendly or unfriendly relations with one another yet having different loyalties and different traditions. Such a use of the word would be completely contrary to the New Testament of the Church as Christ's chosen instrument, "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; . . . that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish"⁵.

The nearest we get in the New Testament to different groups of Christians rivalling one another in the same place, with which we are so familiar today, is the situation in Corinth (1 Cor. i 10-13). But we do not find St Paul referring to these groups as "churches." In his mind there are no such things as "churches" of that kind. No, he finds himself compelled to use the very much uglier word "schismata," an ugly word for an ugly situation. But we, after four centuries of it in England, have become so inured to the situation that we have changed the language of the New Testament and gloss it over by calling the rival bodies "churches." And yet it is generally agreed by all theologians today that there are no such things as "churches" except by a corruption of Christian terminology. For example the Report, **CHURCH RELATIONS IN ENGLAND**, drawn up in 1950 by representatives of the Archbishop of Canterbury and representatives of the Evangelical Free "Churches" in England, begins its description of the nature of the Church as follows: "We are agreed that the modern use of the word 'Church' and 'Churches' to mean different denominations or communions into which Christendom is now divided corresponds to nothing in the Bible. The New Testament Church did not consist of a number of separated bodies comparable to our 'Churches,' but was one single Communion. When the word 'Church' is used of some one Church as distinct from others (e.g. the Church at Ephesus or at Corinth), there is no suggestion of one body being denominationally different from another. There was one Christian Church of which all Christians were members"⁶. The Report goes on to take the line of least resistance that so many people do take, and to say that it is impossible to avoid the modern usage and speak in the terminology of the New Testament. I maintain that it must be made possible. We shall never recover our faith in **THE CHURCH**, as long as we continue talking about "churches."

It will be difficult, I suppose to find a word that will take its place. But continental scholars manage to avoid it, by using the word "confessions" in the place of "churches." In some contexts the word "communions" may be used. The word "communion" is open to the same objection as "churches," but it does not clash so violently with the teaching of both scripture and the creeds. It is certainly less distasteful to speak of the "Anglican Communion" than the "Anglican Church," a phrase for which there is no excuse. There is such a thing as "The Church of England" and there is a widespread system which can be called "The Anglican Communion," but there is no such thing as "The Anglican Church." I shall of course be challenged about the title, "The Church of England." True the word "of" in that connection is not very satisfactory from the New Testament point of view which would have expected

"The Church in England." Nonetheless the word "church" is used in its New Testament sense. It does not mean a denomination. What the Church of England claimed when that title was chosen, was to be the one representative in England of the whole Church of God. Her critics dispute the validity of her claim, but they do not argue that the word "Church" has been misused.

On the other hand if there is such a thing as THE CHURCH of England, there can be no such thing as the British Council of CHURCHES. And if there is such a thing as the British Council of CHURCHES, there can be no such thing as THE CHURCH of England. Words will lose their meaning altogether, if we go on using them like this. Dr Alan Richardson writes, "If we used words in their biblical meaning only, we should have to speak of the 'World Council of Schisms and Heresies,' a truth which the leaders of the ecumenical movement and the officers of the 'World Council of Churches have themselves emphasised again and again'". But have we lost all control over language so completely that we must go on perpetuating the very error we desire so much to correct? I repeat we shall never recover a living faith in THE CHURCH while we go on talking about "churches." I have no desire to saddle the World Council with the title Dr Richardson postulates, but surely a title could be found which avoids the dilemma. No doubt it has been much discussed before, but it seems extraordinary that nothing less objectionable, less contrary to the agreed teaching of all theologians, can be found. To start the discussion again I suggest the title, "The Council of Christendom." Like the present title it is ambitious, too ambitious perhaps for a council on which representatives of the Roman Catholic Church do not sit, but unlike the present title, it does express what presumably the Council desires to be. But any title would be better than one which perpetuates falsehood. But if the present title is so embedded in the minds of the public that it cannot be changed, as well it may be, all we can ask is that the error be strictly confined to the official title and never repeated elsewhere. I may be told that the writers of the New Testament did not visualise the present situation, and that language has to be adapted to the changed face of Christendom. It is a false adaptation that conceals the error in the changed situation, glosses it over to look as if nothing had been changed, and tends to have the effect of making the new situation permanent. It is not a change made by the reformers so much as a careless way of speaking into which people have allowed themselves to slip. The early Methodists for instance were very wise in their choice of the phrase "The Methodist Connection" instead of "The Methodist Church."

There is a large section of opinion looking wistfully at Christianity but becoming very impatient with "the churches"

and rightly so. It is as though they cried, "Away with the churches give us the Church." Unfortunately it is only the first half of the cry that reaches our ears, because the very idea of the Church, except as a feature of past history or a future dream, has been blotted out of their horizon. So much so that a man cannot speak of THE CHURCH but what the question is rapped out, "Which church?" He may answer in the words of scripture, "The church of God which he purchased with his own blood"⁸, but he must be prepared to follow that up. The continued use of the word "churches"² in the sense described is what helps to perpetuate this attitude on their part. We cannot really be such slaves of a way of speaking that we can no longer adapt our language to express the truth or at least to avoid denying it.

Appeals are made to Christians to pray for unity. And people are beginning to pray. But we must also correct our attitude, and if people want some little step to take in a definite direction towards unity, I suggest they begin with their speech. It is a very small step, but it is a step over a very real obstacle. If we will discipline ourselves never to use the word "churches" to describe rival Christian organisations, we shall at least be clearing away some of the ground towards building up again in the minds of men the old reverence for THE CHURCH.

¹ 2 Cor. xi 28.

² Acts xv 41.

³ Rev. i 4.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiv 34.

⁵ Eph. v. 25, 27.

⁶ Church Relations in England,
S.P.C.K. 1950, p.20.

⁷ Introduction to the Teaching of the
New Testament, 6. p. 286.

⁸ Acts xx 28.

DOM GODFREY STOKES, O.S.B.

JOINT C.S.I.—LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION★

An Agreed Statement on the Church and the Ministry

1. The nature of the Church and of the Ministry within the Church can only be understood rightly within the context of God's revelation of himself, his eternal saving purpose, his saving act in Jesus Christ his Son and the continuing saving work of the Risen and Ascended Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Church exists by the grace of God and those who belong to it are members of the Church by the grace of God.
2. The Church exists and men are called into the fellowship of the Church in order that through it God may carry out his eternal purpose in Christ (Eph. 3: 9-11). It is a fellowship of men with God and with one another, in Christ. It is a fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As its heart is this fellowship with God, it is at its deepest a reality in the Spirit. We believe that it is God's will that men become members of the Church through faith in the Gospel and baptism into Christ (Eph. 2: 8-10, John 3: 5, and Matt. 28: 19-20). To be outside the Church by unbelief or to be cut off from the Church's fellowship because of unrepented sin is a serious matter. Yet, in the present state of disunity, no body of Christians can rightly claim to be in an exclusive sense the Church or look upon its judgments as necessarily inspired by the Spirit.
3. It is God's purpose that the Church should be the place where he and his saving work in Christ are manifest. It is his will that the one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church be seen in actual communities of human beings, baptised into Christ, to which he can make known his will and through which he can fulfil it (John 17: 21). Because of the continuing fact of human sin, even in the redeemed, the Church is not in any of its manifestations wholly obedient to the will of God. But the Church of God in every place is called continually to turn to God, so that through its life Christ may be set forth.
4. We not only speak of the Church in the sense of the totality of all Christ's People, throughout all ages and all lands, who are one in him; and of the Church as the local fellowship of believers who gather in one place. We use the word 'Church' of the Christians in a region and of those Christians who belong to a particular denomination. Where such usage carries with it the implication that other Christians are not members of the Church Universal, it is not in accordance with the New Testament. We do well to recognize that the fundamental unity is God's gift in Christ and does in a real sense appear even where, owing to

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history, race or tradition, there are such wide divergencies in belief and practice among those calling themselves Christians that we cannot yet see any way towards visible unity consistent with loyalty to Christ and his truth. We should seek to discover and to develop this unity in our one Lord and to express it wherever we can in acts of obedience together. This is under the conditions of the world today need for Christians to discover and obey the will of God in and through a continuing fellowship which covers a wider area than any one local congregation. Where this fellowship, united in the Word and Sacraments, is a manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit and an instrument of God's working, it may be called the Church.

5. The Church is Apostolic in its essential nature, in the sense that it shares in the Mission of the Son by the Father and is empowered by the Holy Spirit (John 20: 21-23). For the accomplishment of this total ministry to the world there is given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Church some form of ministering (I Cor. 12). Every Christian man and woman, has a *Charisma*, a spiritual gift. It is an error to think that some members of the Church are called to be active and the others to be passive. Every member is meant both to give and receive. The interrelated activity of the whole Body of Christ is the revelation of the interested activity of the True God, in his saving work for the universe. In relation to the world, out of which God has called his Church, the whole Church is a royal Priesthood, in and through Christ brings God to the world and the world to God. To be the Church is to be a ministering community, because it is the Body of Christ who came 'not to be ministered unto but to minister' (Mark 10. 45).

6. In order that through his Church, Christ may be made manifest to the world which he died to save, the quality of the relationship between every member of the Church and God through Christ and of every member of the Church one with another in Christ is vital. Therefore Christ has given to his Church a ministry, in the special sense of persons set apart to perform certain functions within the fellowship, which are needed so that the Church may worship God in thankful remembrance of his saving act in Christ and may witness for him to the world (Eph. 4: 11-12). This pastoral office was given to the Apostles at the first. There is a 'watching over' the sheep and a 'serving' of the sheep, '*Episcopate*' and '*Diakonia*'. Both are founded in Christ and both He entrusts to men (I Peter 5: 1-4). We believe that the continuance of such a ministry is necessary to the full well-being and activity of the Church everywhere and in all ages. We believe that by Christ's will it rests upon the Church to determine in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, how from time to time these functions of watching and serving shall be carried out. We see no reason to believe that any one pattern of the Christian minis-

try has an exclusive claim to divine ordering and approval at all time and under all conditions. If we discern God at work within any body of Christians through a ministry of the Word and Sacraments, we are bound to take this fact into account in all discussion about Christian unity.

7. This ministry is within the Church and is not to be thought of as possessing any independent relation to Christ in the Church and for the life and work of the Church. It is not the creation of the Church and it is given to the Church not to please the Church but to do the will of Christ its Lord. It is the duty of the Church to be alert to recognize that God has called this or that man to this special ministry, in whatever form, and to set him apart by prayer and according to ancient custom, laying on of hands, to the office. At the heart of the work of the ministry must always be the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, for it is in and through them that Christ constitutes and keeps alive his church.

8. The essential continuity of the Church is in the continual presence and the activity of the Lord with the faithful. But, because the Church's obedience is imperfect the Church has not continued perfectly 'in love'. The fellowship has been broken. Because of disunity among Christians, changes in the form, manner or ordination and functions of the ministry have been made without the approval of the whole Church on earth at the time. It appeared to those responsible then, and appears to many today, that such action was inevitable unless they were to be false to the Gospel. Yet, although we may agree that such changes may at times rightly be made, we must insist that they can only be justified if done prayerfully and with the widest possible approval of Christians, subject always to the absolute loyalty to Christ and the Gospel. God is a God of order and we may not lightly change what we have inherited. Yet order itself may be made into an idolatry that turns men away from the living God. All remain under the obligation to seek God's way for the restoration of unity in the Spirit.

9. Every Church makes rules for the selection and setting apart of men for the ministry and keeps a list of those whom it accepts as ministers within its fellowship. In the sense of obedience to its rules, validity is an essential concept of any society. The error comes when we identify the rules of our Church with the absolute will of God, and deny, implicitly or explicitly, that God accepts and uses some other form of the ministry equally with the form to which we are accustomed. It is not for us to determine how and where God can work.

10. It is true that the exercise of oversight (*Episcope*) was early entrusted by the Church to one Bishop in each area. This ordering was for many centuries universal and is still the accepted form among the majority of Christians. We do not hold that it is

essential for the existence of the Church, or for the ministry and the Sacraments; or that God has bound himself to grant through it greater blessing, authority or grace than through other forms of the Church's ministry. It has been and can be grievously misused, as can every gift of God. But we see value in it as expressing through a person the oversight which is a vital part of the pastoral ministry within the Church. However the presence or absence of episcopacy, ought, not, by itself to determine the relationship of one Church with another.

I.L.A.F.O. NOTES

by Michael Bruce.

TRUE ECUMENISM AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

The slow and steady rising of the tide is not so obvious as the dashing waves at the surface caught by a tempestuous wind. In almost all Christian bodies the tide of true ecumenism is rising. Men are growing increasingly aware of the calling of God to unity. The reason for this is not only that our Lord prayed that his people might be one, nor only because men are growing more deeply aware of the reason for his prayer: "That the world may believe that thou didst send me"; but because men are growing to understand the ground of his prayer: "That they may be one as we are." This growing awareness that the longing for Christian unity is rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity, in the very nature of the God we worship and is inseparable from our love of God and our adoration of the Three in One is the really significant fact of our age.

THE WORK OF THE DEVIL

It is not surprising that the devil should oppose a movement which has its roots in the nature of God. The devil works always for division. He makes a great fuss over it, nor is there one of his dirty tricks he will not exploit in his efforts to prevent the healing of the disunity of Christendom which has served him so well. Bad schemes of reunion, infidelity to the Catholic Faith, shallow compromises—to twist Christian longing for unity into these, is the sort of subtle work the devil enjoys. Harsh criticism of those he has so tricked and uncharitableness towards them, are the means he employs to assault the more orthodox.

The winds blow wildly at the surface and the waves are torn apart in spray; but the tide is still rising. When a submarine dives it soon reaches calm water. The storm tossed waves are only at the surface. This is certainly true of the growth towards Christian unity. For this very reason however, it is not always easy to write about the most important things that are happening, for if they are dragged to the surface of publicity the devil will use all his arts to spoil them.

"RHODES" AND DISCRETION

The "Rhodes Affair," which I have discussed with one of the two people chiefly involved, is a good example. The report that an innocent proposal for "private and unofficial" conversations between Roman Catholic and Orthodox theologians was "secret and official" was a land-mine calculated to hold up all traffic. There were no doubt several human errors of judgment and peccadillos in the launching and continuance of the false report, but we need not look for any arch villain to account for the affair, except where the arch-villain customarily resides. He loves to scrape together every little sin and very little mistake he can, until he has made a sizeable dunghill.

It behoves those who work for unity to know their enemy. This means that while I may talk about many of the more interesting parts of the work of I.L.A.F.O. when I have the opportunity of speaking to readers of Faith and Unity, yet in these notes I shall avoid, if I can, publishing anything which if it got into wrong hands might be misused.

A VISIT TO HOLLAND

This applies to much of my recent brief visit to Holland and Germany. None the less I can use this to illustrate both the fact of the rising tide and the importance of the work of I.L.A.F.O. What Anglican priest a century ago could have crowded into into a fortnight, being the over-night guest of a Roman Catholic Monsignor, a Dutch Reformed Pastor, an Old Catholic Bishop, a Lutheran minister, and an ex-Dutch Reformed lecturer to Roman Catholic theological students? Had such a remarkable creature existed his friendship with his various hosts would presumably have been rooted in some personal quality wholly separate from his theology and in an unusual adroitness in avoiding all questions related to religion.

My trip was different, my hosts *were* personal friends, but in every case the friendship rests solely on the experience of discussing together the very points on which Christians have for centuries been most deeply divided. Apart from those I have mentioned, I had the privilege of long discussions, amongst the Old Catholics, with the Archbishop of Utrecht, one of the Professors at their seminary and a student who is a convert from the

Dutch Reformed Church; amongst the Roman Catholics with members of one of the Religious Orders and the Professor of Systematic Theology at a leading university, amongst the Dutch Reformed with several of the leaders of the movement to restore Apostolic Faith and Order in that communion.

There is much to do. The gates of opportunity are wide open. Two months would have been better than two weeks, even for the small area covered. Some day men may realise that work for Christian unity requires a comparable expenditure to missionary work in men, time and money.

A VIGOROUS DEFENCE OF ANGLICANISM

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY by J. V. Langmead Casserley

(Longmans 21/-)

This is a valuable contribution to theological literature *de Ecclesia*, and deserves to be widely read and carefully studied. The author's aim is to present the Church as a necessary community without which man would be unable to reach the full spirituality of which he is capable. Man is a social being and therefore true human spirituality must necessarily include a social and historical element, which in theology is called "the doctrine of the Church" for Christian existence is essentially existence *in the Church*.

Dr Casserley finds the wholeness of the Church exhibited, at least potentially, in the Anglican communion, and hopes not only to enable Anglicans to appreciate more deeply the wealth and strength of their own position, but also to help non-Anglicans to understand better the Anglican point of view. The Anglican Communion is not a *confessional* Church, and so there are, in a sense, no specifically Anglican doctrines. It is attached and committed in the first place, not to its own formularies, but to the holy scriptures, the Catholic creeds and the central traditions of the historic Church. Nevertheless, there is certainly a distinctive Anglican ethos and point of view, and in these days of ecumenical drawing together it is very important that non-Anglicans should be led to appreciate much more profoundly than some of them do the sources of what may be called the fundamental Anglican insights.

This book is in fact a vigorous defence of the Anglican position. The author points out that Anglicans may be distinguished into three groups (1) those who, if Anglicanism did not exist, would probably find their place in one of the great Reformation Churches; (2) those who if there were no such thing as Anglicanism, would find their home in the Roman Catholic Church; and (3) those who would have to say that if Anglicanism

did not exist they would probably have no place at all to go, because they find both the alternatives, Protestantism on the one hand, and Roman Catholicism on the other, quite unacceptable and indeed too appalling even to contemplate. Dr Casserley frankly identifies himself with the third group, for the members of which Anglicanism is the only possible spiritual home, but which he carefully distinguishes from the large number of moderate or central Anglicans who cling to the idea of the Anglican compromise or *via media*. He thinks that although these central Anglicans probably constitute an actual majority of the total number of Anglicans living today, they form the least significant group from the point of view of the destiny of Anglicanism, and have least to contribute. He regards that destiny as a movement from compromise to synthesis, from the *middle* way to the *total* way, and he makes the bold claim that ultimately the destiny of Anglicanism is the destiny of Christendom. "The clue to reunion is not to be found in the Anglican compromise, not in some future victory of one Anglican party over the other. The way to the reunion of all Christendom is to be found in the Anglican synthesis."

In the course of his enthusiastic *apologia* for Anglicanism the author discusses the significance of the Reformation. He points out that while the Anglican Communion is a *reformed* Church, it is not a *Reformation* Church, and that in the light of Anglican history the Reformation is to be interpreted in terms not of discontinuity but of continuity. "It is an episode in Anglican existence and not the beginning of Anglican existence." "The essence of Anglicanism is to be expressed in terms of what it is now visibly becoming, and will more and more become, rather than in terms of what it was in the beginning, whereas the essence of Protestantism is to be found in the original protest of the great Reformers rather than in what Protestantism has since become and is more and more becoming. Protestantism is a great historical *event*; Anglicanism is a great historical *process*."

This is a provocative and stimulating book. Even when it fails to convince, its challenge will not be without profit.

We shall look forward to the appearance of the projected companion volumes which Dr Casserley tells us will deal with the Sacraments and with Christian existentialism.

HUBERT S. BOX.

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